A LETTER

FROM

M. CONDORCET,

One of the Secretaries to the French National Convention,

TO A

MAGISTRATE IN SWISSERLAND,

Not unworthy the perusal of the Magistrates of other Countries.

WITH

A LETTER *from* THOMAS PAINE

TO THE

PEOPLE OF FRANCE.

" *The time of deception is past, and Governments*
" *of every kind, which wish to found their power*
" *on the ignorance and error of the people, must*
" *expect to see the unwieldy ruin tumble from*
" *its sandy and unstable base.*"

EDINBURGH:

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27

On the firſt ſignal of action among our troops, Swiſſerland ought to have recalled her regiments; not with ill humour, but as incapable of ſerving in the manner they had ſerved, under the old form of Government.

Inſtead of being terrified at the pretended propaganda of freedom, to which our Emigrants have annexed ſo ridiculous an importance, Swiſſerland ought to have felt that juſtice, and the common intereſt of all nations, required that each of them ſhould ſupport the independent and excluſive right of changing their own laws: You would then have ſoon underſtood the proceedings of the French.

But the individual intereſts of ſome families in repute, have preponderated againſt thoſe of the Swiſs nation.

From the completeing of the Conſtitution, on the 3d of September 1791, there was not a well

informed man in France, who did not perceive that the obſtinacy of the King, in preſerving a regiment of Swiſs guards contrary to the expreſs conſtitutional act, would be productive of great misfortune. This the National Aſſembly neglected no means to prevent.

Examine our proceedings, and you will ſee that the patriotic Deputies inceſſantly ſolicited the diſmiſſion of the Swiſs guards. We could not deceive the people by telling them that your countrymen, who we knew had been ſeduced by their chiefs and the emiſſaries of the Court, were not dangerous to our freedom. We beheld ſuſpicion and animoſity alarmingly and daily increaſe between them and our fellow citizens. Our efforts were rendered impotent by the perfidy of the palace, at the very moment when, with the laws of the Conſtitution

in our hand, we required the departure of a guard which it prohibited: the King had ſecretly filled his palace with this guard, and at the moment when he forſook it, to ſeek for ſafety in the National Aſſembly, he left it his orders to fire on the French; which orders were executed at that expreſs point of time when terms of friendſhip and peace were mutually interchanged. Impute not therefore the death of your countrymen to the French people, but to a treacherous Court; it was not the crime of the Nation, but of the King.

Theſe facts have been legally proved. A letter found on a corporal, who fell on the 10th, written to his daughter, leave no doubts concerning the ſuggeſtions employed to deceive the ſoldiers.

It has been ſaid, you no longer acknowledge the French people as a nation, becauſe they no longer have a King. You yourſelves have

no King, yet the French do not refuſe you ſuch an acknowledgment. Have not ſome hundreds of years paſſed away, ſince you deſtroyed Nobility in moſt of your cantons? Have you not expelled the Romiſh Clergy from ſeveral of them, and ſeized their effects? And you would treat us as enemies becauſe we wiſh to imitate you, and effect thoſe good purpoſes ſome ages too late, which you were wiſe enough long ſince to carry into execution. I grant our laws have aboliſhed all diſtinctions, and that yours have preſerved many. But how happens this? Is it not by having followed in our political ſyſtem, as you did in yours, the ſpirit of the times?

Who can deny that a nation has a right to enact and to change the laws by which it chuſes to be governed; or to free itſelf from a king, or ruler, who has violated

his oaths? Approve our conduct, or the Heir of the Houſe of Auſtria will come with old parchments in his hand, to reclaim the rights on which you have ſeized, and the ſovereignty of which you have deſpoiled him.

Do not forget that Joſeph II. ſought thoſe obſolete titles in your archives, from which traitors were paid to ſteal them.

You are no longer a poor people poſſeſſed only of iron. Immenſe ſums, the product of your induſtry, have been expended on a ſoil formerly barren, but now fertile. You have rich Commercial cities; your land ſells at a higher price than any land on earth; your citizens are wealthy; your States have treaſuries, and you are become a tempting bait to the avidity of deſpots, by whom you would not be ſpared.

Compare the reſult of two ſyſtems between which you have to

chuſe, that of an alliance with France, free and triumphant, and that of France, abandoned or attacked by you, and obliged to ſubmit its politics to the dictates of the Cabinet of Vienna.

In the firſt caſe your independence is ſecured. A Republic of twenty-ſix millions of men will, from loyalty and intereſt, become your guarantee. But in the contrary ſyſtem, everywhere ſurrounded by the poſſeſſions of the Houſe of Auſtria, or the Princes ſubjected to its power, you will enjoy no other independence than it ſhall pleaſe to grant, and will be no further free than as it may rather incline to ruin than to conquer you.

Let us ſuppoſe that the Combined Kings will promote the mad ambition of ſome of the people of Bern; and that Neufchatel and Franche Comte ſhould be the reward of the war, which the Canton of Bern ſhould make on freedom; what

would be your gain? Under the name of Allies you would become the ſlaves of the pride of one of your Cantons; you would all be partitioned between France and Auſtria combining againſt you.

The example of Poland ought to terrify all independent nations; and not to ſee that the ſyſtem of partitioning is become the ſyſtem of great monarchies, is to be blind.

Recollect, you form the only barrier between the Houſe of Auſtria and Italy, where that Power reigns ſupreme at this moment. Remember it will neglect no means to ſecure its power there, which is at preſent precarious, and for which it is indebted to the weakneſs of the King of Sardinia, the corruption of Venice, and the treachery of the Queen of Naples.

An alliance with us is eaſily made, the baſis of which would be the reſpective guarantee which ſhould preſerve France and Swiſ-

ſerland from being diſmembered, and render them independent.

The conditions on the part of Swiſſerland would be to furniſh armies to defend France, againſt all attacks on the frontiers of Italy and Alſatia, as far as Landau; in return for which, France muſt defend the frontiers of Swiſſerland, on the ſide of Italy and Suabia. Suppoſing either of them to be thus attacked, the Allied Power would be upon the flank of the enemy of the power inſulted.

Shall intereſts thus evident, thus potent, in which freedom and independence are included, be balanced by the fear of introducing French principles? Firſt, let us aſk, what harm theſe principles will effect, were they adopted? They are deſtructive of various aſſumed powers; but, as you have neither nobility nor clergy to deſtroy, as your feudal rights are preſerved with your own conſent, ac-

cording to ancient agreement, and cannot be a motive for general inſurrection, and as your taxes are few, you have nothing to fear from thoſe commotions which occaſion a whole nation to riſe in a body.

Beſide, can your chiefs ſuppoſe they ſhall eternally perſuade the Helvetians, that they do not hold their freedom from nature, but from ſome old deeds written ſome centuries ago; that they ought to remain eternally ſubjected to ſuch a government as theſe deeds have eſtabliſhed; that their anceſtors of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, had indeed a right to enact ſuch laws as might ſecure their happineſs; but that it would be a crime in their deſcendants to exerciſe a like right in the eighteenth century; that in thoſe times men were ſufficiently enlightened and wiſe to chuſe a proper conſtitution; but that, ſince they have learnt to read, and that the fundamental truths

of ſocial order have been analized and diſcuſſed by ſo many nations, men are become incapable of any ſuch choice? Do theſe chiefs imagine, they ſhall long continue to make their fellow-citizens ſuppoſe, that the title of freeman, of ſuch or ſuch a town, transfers either by inheritance or purchaſe, according to a certain form, an eternal and irrevocable right of ſovereignty over the inhabitants of the territory?

The principle of the American and French Conſtitutions, that is the unalienable ſovereignty of the people, is now become one of thoſe truths which can no longer be darkened by ſophiſtry, nor concealed even from ignorance; and the way to induce a people to hate its preſent government, would be to inform them that it will not admit of change. They will then diſcover that they are deceived on-

ly to be enſlaved, and hoodwinked only to be plundered.

Each prince, each ſenate, each corporation, which ſhall deny this ſacred principle, will, by that very denial, proclaim itſelf the enemy and the tyrant of the people it would forcibly govern.

If you wiſh to preſerve your preſent governments, do not enflame your countrymen by conteſting their claims; but govern them with ſo much juſtice and wiſdom, as to rather make them fear than deſire alteration. Do you not perceive, that by treating the French as enemies, becauſe they profeſs truths, of which you are afraid, you oblige them, for their own ſafety, to make every effort to propagate thoſe truths? Are you not aware, that governments, by declaring againſt us, oblige us to ſeek allies among the very people whom their chiefs betray and trample on? To the per-

ſecuted, reſiſtance becomes a ſword, which the right of ſelf-defence commands them to employ.

Thus you will not prevent the truths which have been the principle of our Revolution, from being known and adopted in Swiſſerland as they are in every other country; and by combining with our enemies, and appearing to favour them, you will but increaſe our deſire to diffuſe theſe opinions more generally: you will but convince your people of the neceſſity of putting them in practice; for they will eaſily diſcover that your chiefs would not ſo violently hate theſe principles, if they had not the guilty wiſh to abuſe a power which they themſelves ſecretly regard as illegitimate.

The time of deception is paſt, and Governments of every kind, which wiſh to found their power on the ignorance and error of the people, muſt expect to ſee the un-

weildy ruin tumble from its ſandy and unſtable baſe.

In fine, you have Cantons which are purely democratic. Can you hope to blind them ſo far as that they ſhall not ſee our cauſe is theirs; nor perceive that it is better to owe their ſafety and independence to the noble friendſhip of a republic of twenty-ſix millions of men, than to the contemptible tyrants of Germany? The deſcendants of William Tell will bluſh to accept protection ſo ſhameful. The ſucceſſors of Albert of Auſtria, the heirs of Charles the Raſh, are ſtill at your gates, where they behave with the hereditary inſolence of a regal banditti; there they remain to execute on a free people the horrors which your anceſtors were wiſe enough to eſcape. Men, who have never yet plied the neck under the yoke of ariſtocracy, have now to chuſe between arrogant tyranny and freedom; the ſucceſſors

of Giſler*, and the imitators of Tell. Think you the Swiſs can heſitate? No—Erlach, and the

* By ſome ſpelt Griſler; the then Auſtrian Governor of Ury, now of the Thirteen Cantons. This Griſler, or Giſler, had a pole erected in the market place of Altorf, on which he put a cap, and commanded every paſſenger to pay it obedience. William Tell refuſed, and he was commanded by Griſler, on pain of being hanged, to ſhoot an apple, with an arrow, from the head of his own ſon. His ſucceſs in this feat is well known; but it is worth relating, that the tyrannic governor determined to impriſon him for life, and to ſee him ſecured in the dungeon himſelf. He therefore cauſed him to be fettered, put into a boat, and tranſported to a caſtle on the lake of Lucerne. The governor went in the boat, and being overtaken by a ſtorm, one of his ſervants (the boatmen not being able to manage the veſſel) requeſted that Tell, known to be the moſt expert boatman in the country, ſhould be unbound, and ſet to the helm. Griſler aſſented, and Tell, taking the command, ſteered the veſſel cloſe to a rock; where, leaping aſhore with agility, he made his eſcape through the mountains to Stauffacher; where he lay concealed, till the day for effecting the freedom of Swiſſerland arrived, when he joined his companions

noble deſpots of Bern may betray their country and traffic its freedom for the gold of Auſtria, but the brave peaſants of the Helvetian hills will not be inveigled by theſe vile ſlaves, who have for ages been accuſtomed to ſell the blood of their brethren to Kings. The characteriſtics of Giſler are now to be found at Bern; and there, if any drop of the blood of Tell ſtill circulates in the veins of the Swiſs, there muſt they go to combat tyranny.

LETTER

OF

THOMAS PAINE *to the* People *of* France.

Paris, Sept. 25.

FELLOW CITIZENS! *First year of the Republic.*

I receive, with affectionate gratitude, the honour which the late National Aſſembly has conferred upon me, by adopting me a Citizen of France; and the additional honour of being elected by my Fellow Citizens a Member of the National Convention. Happily impreſſed, as I am, by thoſe teſtimonies of reſpect ſhewn towards me as an individual, I feel my felicity encreaſed by ſeeing the barrier broken down that divided Patriotiſm by ſpots of earth, and limited Citizenſhip to the ſoil, like vegetation.

Had thoſe honours been conferred in an hour of national tranquillity, they would have afforded no other means of ſhewing my affection, than to have accepted and enjoyed them; but they come accompanied with circumſtances that give me the honourable opportunity of commencing my Citizenſhip in the ſtormy hour of difficulties. I come not to enjoy repoſe. Convinced that the cauſe of France is the cauſe of all mankind, and that as liberty cannot be purchaſed by a wiſh, I gladly ſhare

with you the dangers and honours neceſſary to ſucceſs.

I am well aware that the moment of any great change, ſuch as that accompliſhed on the 10th of Auguſt, is unavoidably the moment of terror and confuſion. The mind, highly agitated by hope, ſuſpicion, and apprehenſion, continues without reſt till the change be accompliſhed. But let us now look calmly and confidently forward, and ſucceſs is certain. It is no longer the paltry cauſe of Kings, or of this or of that individual, that calls France and her armies into action. It is the great cauſe of ALL. It is the eſtabliſhment of a new æra, that ſhall blot deſpotiſm from the earth, and fix, on the laſting principles of Peace and Citizenſhip, the great Republic of Man.

It has been my fate to have borne a ſhare in the commencement and complete eſtabliſhment of one Revolution (I mean the Revolution of America). The ſucceſs and events of that Revolution are encouraging to us. The proſperity and happineſs that have ſince flowed to that country, have amply rewarded her for all the hardſhips ſhe endured, and for all the dangers ſhe encountered.

The principles on which that Revolution began, have extended themſelves to Europe; and an over-ruling Providence is regenerating the Old World by the principles of the New. The diſtance of America from all the other parts of the globe, did not admit of her carrying thoſe principles beyond her own ſituation. It is to the peculiar honour of France, that ſhe now raiſes the ſtandard of liberty for all nations; and in fighting her own battles, contends for the rights of all mankind.

The ſame ſpirit of fortitude that inſured ſucceſs to America, will inſure it to France; for it is impoſſible to conquer a nation determined to be free! The military circumſtances that now unite themſelves to France, are ſuch as the deſpots of the earth know nothing of, and can form no calculation upon. They know not what it is to fight againſt a nation. They have only been accuſtomed to make war upon each other, and they know from ſyſtem and practice how to calculate the probable ſucceſs of deſpot againſt deſpot; and here their knowledge and their experience end.

But in a conteſt like the preſent, a new and boundleſs variety of circum-

ſtances ariſes, that deranges all ſuch cuſtomary calculations. When a whole nation acts as an army, the deſpot knows not the extent of the power againſt which he contends. New armies riſe againſt him with the neceſſity of the moment. It is then that the difficulties of an envading enemy multiply, as in the former caſe they diminiſhed; and he finds them at their height when he expected them to end.

The only war that has any ſimilarity of circumſtances with the preſent is the late revolution war in America. On her part, as it now is in France, it was a war of the whole nation.—There it was that the enemy, by beginning to conquer, put himſelf in a condition of being conquered. His firſt victories prepared him for defeat. He advanced till he could not retreat, and found himſelf in the midſt of a nation of armies.

Were it now to be propoſed to the Auſtrians and Pruſſians to eſcort them into the middle of France, and there leave them to make the moſt of their ſituation, they would ſee too much into the dangers of it to accept the offer, and the ſame dangers would attend them could they arrive there by any

other means. Where then is the military policy of their attempting to obtain by force that which they would refuſe by choice? But to reaſon with deſpots is throwing reaſon away. The beſt of arguments is a vigorous preparation.

Man is ever a ſtranger to the ways by which Providence regulates the order of all things. The interference of foreign deſpots may ſerve to introduce into their own enſlaved countries the principles they come to oppoſe. Liberty and Equality are bleſſings too great to be the inheritance of France alone. It is honour to her to be their firſt champion; and ſhe may now ſay to her enemies, with a mighty voice, "O! ye Auſtrians, ye Pruſſians! ye who now turn your bayonets againſt us; it is for you; it is for all Europe; it is for all mankind, and not for France alone, that ſhe raiſes the ſtandard of Liberty and Equality!"

The public cauſe has hitherto ſuffered from the contradictions contained in the Conſtitution of the former conſtituent Aſſembly. Thoſe contradictions have ſerved to divide the opinions of individuals at home, and to obſcure the great principles of the Revolution

in other countries. But when thoſe contradictions ſhall be removed, and the Conſtitution be made conformable to the Declaration of Rights—when the begatelles of monarchy, royalty, regency, and hereditary ſucceſſion, &c. &c. be expoſed, with all their abſurdities—a new ray of light will be thrown over the world, and the Revolution will derive new ſtrength by being univerſally underſtood.

The ſcene that now opens itſelf to France extends far beyond the boundaries of her own dominions. Every nation is becoming her colleague, and every Court is become her enemy. It is now the cauſe of all Nations againſt the cauſe of all Courts. The terrors that Deſpotiſm felt, clandeſtinely begot a confederation of Deſpots; and their attack upon France is produced by their fears at home.

In entering on this great ſcene, greater than any nation has yet been called to act in, let us ſay to the agitated mind, be calm. Let us puniſh by inſtructing, rather than by revenge. Let us begin the new æra by a greatneſs of friendſhip, and hail the approach of union and ſucceſs. *Your Fellow-Citizen,*

THOMAS PAINE.